

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 068824 TOSEC 030066
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LIMDIS FOR MR. HARTMAN

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HANSCOM FLD MASS 28 MAR 77 QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L USNATO 1747

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: NATO, AWACS, OCON
SUBJECT: WHITHER AND WHETHER: COMMENT ON DPC MINISTERIAL
MEETING, MARCH 25, 1977

REF: A. USNATO 1727 DTG 251937Z MAR 77 (NOTAL)
B. USNATO 1732 DTG 252114Z MAR 77 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: ALTHOUGH THE MARCH 25 DPC MINISTERIAL MEETING
KEPT ALIVE A NATO AEW PROGRAM BASED ON AWACS, AND
ALTHOUGH IT REVEALED MINISTERIAL RESOLVE TO ACHIEVE
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 STATE 068824 TOSEC 030066

AN ALLIANCE-WIDE PROGRAM, WE BELIEVE THAT THE UK MAY
YET ANNOUNCE THAT IT WILL DEVELOP ITS OWN NATIONAL
FORCE BASED ON NIMROD. IN THIS EVENT, ALLIANCE RESOLVE
MAY TURN QUICKLY INTO ALLIANCE FRUSTRATION AND AN
INCLINATION TO REGARD AEW FOR THE OTHER ALLIES AS A DEAD
ISSUE. THE FRG, WHILE POSITIVE DURING THE MINISTERIAL
MEETING, STILL FACES SUBSTANTIAL INTERNAL OBSTACLES, WE

BELIEVE, WHICH MAY DELAY OR EVEN PROHIBIT FRG PARTICIPATION. THUS, WE BELIEVE IT IS FAR FROM WELL AND THAT ONLY TIMELY US LEADERSHIP CAN GIVE IT A NEW LEASE ON LIFE, SHOULD THE UK GO IT ALONE. END SUMMARY.

1. THE UNEXPECTED RESULT OF THE DPC MINISTERIAL MEETING ON NATO AEW, MARCH 25, 1977, IS SUMMARIZED IN THE COMMUNIQUE (REF A). THIS MESSAGE EXPANDS UPON OUR INITIAL COMMENT (REF B), FORWARDED IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE MEETING.

2. VIRTUALLY THE ENTIRE MINISTERIAL DISCUSSION CONCENTRATED ON THE ISSUE OF THE UK'S REPEATED INSISTENCE THAT IT COULD SUPPORT AN AWACS REPEAT AWACS AEW FORCE ONLY IF A FIRM ALLIANCE DECISION COULD BE TAKEN PRIOR TO APRIL 1, 1977, AND ON THE INABILITY OR UNWILLINGNESS OF SEVERAL ALLIES TO MEET THIS SCHEDULE. WHILE THIS FOCUS SERVED TO ILLUMINATE SOME ISSUES, IT ALSO CONCEALED OTHERS, AS DISCUSSED BELOW. ADDITIONALLY, IT MAY HAVE CONDITIONED THE ATTITUDE OF SEVERAL ALLIES IN A WAY TO MAKE SUCCESS MORE DIFFICULT TO ACHIEVE SHOULD THE UK OPT FOR A NIMROD "CONTRIBUTION" TO AEW.

3. ALL MINISTERS UNDERSTOOD CLEARLY THAT UK MINISTER MULLEY'S CAREFULLY WORDED STATEMENT RESERVING HIS GOVERNMENT'S POSITION (PARA 3, REF A) WAS DESIGNED TO PRESERVE THE UK'S ABILITY TO OPT FOR NIMROD. WE BELIEVE THERE IS A VERY GOOD CHANCE THAT THE UK WILL DO JUST THAT, AND THAT IT WILL DO SO VERY SOON. WE ARE NOT SANGUINE THAT

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 STATE 068824 TOSEC 030066

THE US CAN INDUCE THE UK TO DO OTHERWISE, PARTICULARLY SINCE THE BENEFITS OF ANY INDUCEMENTS WE MIGHT OFFER WOULD NECESSARILY BE IN THE FUTURE, WHEREAS ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF FULL NIMROD DEVELOPMENT CAN BE REALIZED QUICKLY. MORE-OVER, CANCELLING NIMROD WOULD GIVE RISE TO IMMEDIATE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC COSTS THAT THE CALLAGHAN GOVERNMENT MAY NOT BE WILLING OR ABLE TO BEAR.

4. SHOULD THE UK DECIDE TO "MAKE ITS CONTRIBUTION" TO NATO AEW BY ALLOCATING SOME NUMBER OF NIMRODS TO ANY FUTURE NATO FORCE, AND TO MAKE SUCH A CONTRIBUTION OPERATIONALLY LOGICAL BY ASSURING ALLIES THAT NIMROD WILL BE FULLY INTEROPERABLE WITH AWACS, A NUMBER OF SMALLER ALLIES WILL FIND THEMSELVES STRIPPED OF THE ARGUMENT WHICH PERSUADED THEM IN THE FIRST PLACE TO SUPPORT THE NATO FORCE BASED ON AWACS: THE ARGUMENT THAT, QUITE APART FROM ITS MILITARY EFFECTIVENESS, - SINGLE SYSTEM NATO AEW FORCE WOULD SERVE AS A SYMBOL OF THE POLITICAL COHESION OF THE ALLIANCE, IT WAS THE FORCE-

FUL REITERATION OF THIS ARGUMENT, BY CANADIAN MINISTER DANSON AND OTHERS, THAT TURNED INITIALLY UNFOCUSED DPC DELIBERATION DURING THE MINISTERIAL MEETING INTO A RESOLVE -- INCOMPLETE AND IMPERFECT, BUT STILL RESOLVE -- TO ACHIEVE AN AWACS FORCE.

5. FAR FROM BELIEVING THAT THIS ARGUMENT FOR ALLIANCE SOLIDARITY IS EITHER SPECIOUS OR MISLEADING, WE GIVE IT GREAT WEIGHT, AND HAVE REPEATEDLY USED IT OURSELVES IN URGING ALLIES TO SUPPORT THE AWACS-BASED PROGRAM. BUT THIS GIVES US ALL THE MORE CONCERN ABOUT THE PROBABLE ALLIED REACTION SHOULD THE UK OPT FOR NIMROD. HAVING AGREED -- MOST RELUCTANTLY, IN MANY INSTANCES -- TO SUPPORT A SINGLE SYSTEM SOLUTION, MANY ALLIES WILL FIND IT EXTREMELY DIFFICULT TO TURN QUICKLY AND IN A POSITIVE FRAME OF MIND TO EXAMINE THE ALTERNATIVE OR AN INTEGRATED AEW FORCE USING TWO SYSTEMS.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 STATE 068824 TOSEC 030066

6. OUR BEST INFORMATION IS THAT A MIXED FORCE OF NIMROD AND AWACS, WHILE NOT AS EFFECTIVE AS A FORCE OF AWACS ALONG AND SURELY NOT AS FLEXIBLE IN ITS EMPLOYMENT, CAN DO THE JOB. IF THE NEED TO COUNTER LOW LEVER AERIAL PENETRATION IS REAL, AS IT SURELY IS, THEN COUNTERING IT IN ANY WAY IS BETTER THAN FAILURE TO MEET IT AT ALL. BUT THIS STARK FACT, WE BELIEVE, MAY BE LOST ON MANY ALLIES, AT LEAST INITIALLY, IN THEIR DISAPPOINTMENT SHOULD THE CREATION OF A SINGLE SYSTEM FORCE NO LONGER PROVE POSSIBLE. GIVEN THE PAINFUL TASK FACING ALL ALLIES (EXCEPT THE UK) IN REORDERING PRIORITIES TO ACCOMMODATE NATO AEW, WE EXPECT THAT THERE WILL BE A DISTINCT INCLINATION IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES EVEN TO AVOID FURTHER EXAMINATION OF THE SUBJECT.

7. SHOULD THIS SITUATION EVOLVE, WE BELIEVE THAT PROMPT AND POSITIVE US LEADERSHIP WILL BE REQUIRED TO REVIVIFY NATO AEW. WE RECOGNIZE THE UNDERSTANDABLE RELUCTANCE TO PLAN FOR THE WORST WHILE ONE IS STILL HOPING FOR THE BEST, BUT WE BELIEVE THAT THE PROBABILITY OF THE UK DECIDING TO DEVELOP ITS OWN NATIONAL FORCE IS SUFFICIENTLY HIGH THAT SERIOUS CONTINGENCY PLANNING IS NOW REQUIRED. AS WASHINGTON KNOWS WELL, THE ACQUISITION SHORTFALL ALREADY FACING THE ALLIANCE, TO MAKE UP FOR LESS THAN HOPED-FOR CONTRIBUTIONS BY GREECE, ITALY, DENMARK, AND PERHAPS GREECE, CONSTITUTES A MAJOR UNSOLVED PROBLEM. THIS PROBLEM WILL BE SERIOUSLY EXACERBATED, WE BELIEVE, SHOULD THE UK DECIDE TO GO IT ALONE WHILE DRESSING UP ITS DECISION IN TERMS OF NATO INTEROPERABILITY.

8. FINALLY, WE NOTE THAT MINISTER LEBER'S STATEMENTS DURING THE MINISTERIAL MEETING, WHILE MOVING THE FRG TO A QUALIFIED "YES", MAY YET HAVE CONCEALED AS MUCH AS THEY REVEALED. LEBER MENTIONED, FOR EXAMPLE, AN FRG
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 05 STATE 068824 TOSEC 030066

SHARE OF 20 PERCENT DURING ONE INTERVENTION IN WHICH HE WAS ATTEMPTING TO DEMONSTRATE THE IMPORTANCE OF FRENCH PARTICIPATION. THE FACT IS WELL KNOWN THAT WE HAVE NOT YET DETERMINED WHAT SHARE THE FRG IS WILLING TO CONTRIBUTE. THE FACT THAT WE ARE BACK IN SQUARE ONE IF THE FRG INTENDS TO HOLD FIRM AT OR NEAR 20 PERCENT SHOULD BE NO LESS CLEAR. UNQUOTE CHRISTOPHER

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